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Constantine Before the Walls of Jerusalem

Lent by William G. Mather



Entrance of Tarquinius Priscus and Tanaquil into Rome

Lent by Mr. and Mrs. John L. Severance

# THE BULLETIN OF THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

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## SPECIAL EXHIBITION OF RENAISSANCE ART IN GALLERY II

The problem of arrangement comes in for special study in museum installation—how best to give the effect of a period by actual objects without the adventitious aid of an actually reconstructed environment. A museum in the true sense should seek to enhance the objects themselves so that the age speaks through them rather than through any architectural setting. Gallery II has been rearranged as a Renaissance gallery with this in mind. Exhibits from the Museum collection and numerous loans from Cleveland collectors are shown and an attempt has been made to present them in such a way that the visitor may perhaps catch something of the spirit of the time.

The new Enthroned Madonna and Child with Saints,<sup>1</sup> the gift of J. H. Wade, is exhibited for the first time so that particular emphasis has been placed upon sculpture in the rearrangement. The Buglioni relief is flanked by two unglazed terra cotta angels, lent by William G. Mather, characteristic of a type which became increasingly popular in the late fifteenth century. Flanking the Buglioni also are two undecorated walnut cassoni of the same period and two splendidly painted cassone panels.

The cassone or bridal chest was one of the most characteristic of the pieces of furniture in the Renaissance home. Every Italian girl of sufficient wealth was provided with one or more to carry her trousseau and other objects for the new home. When it came to the chests of the wealthier families they were naturally of more elaborate form, and the front and sides were often decorated with painted scenes. The artist seldom attempted to portray subjects of deeply serious nature—the story told was usually one of good omen, a story which would decorate and be a source of continued enjoyment.

One panel, Constantine Before the Walls of Jerusalem, lent by William G. Mather, is attributed by Schubring to the

<sup>1</sup> Described in the February *Bulletin*.

Anghiari Master influenced by Benozzo Gozzoli. At the left, Constantine is seen asleep in his tent, his mother, the Empress Helena, appearing to him in a dream. The main portion of the panel is filled by a gaily caparisoned procession, the horsemen decked out with all the delightful finery of their time; while, to the right, a group of soldiers are storming the Holy City beyond whose walls the gilded dome of the Holy Sepulchre rises. It is a charmingly authentic representation of pageant and battle scene such as must have appeared often in the artist's own experience. The panel dates about 1450.

The other panel, loaned by Mr. and Mrs. John L. Severance, represents the entrance of Tarquinius Priscus and Tanaquil, his wife, into Rome. By Jacopo del Sellaio, it is later in date than the other panel and must have been painted in the latter years of the fifteenth century. At the extreme left the prophetess, Tanaquil, is seen kneeling upon a lofty place as if foreseeing the future glory of her husband. The central portion is taken up by a triumphal chariot, upon which Tarquinius and Tanaquil sit. They are attended by a numerous array of attendants and courtiers, while the Roman eagle, a portent of future glory as ruler of the Roman state, hovers precariously over Tarquin's head, to the obvious joy of his wife. In the right section, Rome is represented, with what are meant to be the Colosseum, Trajan's Column, the Pyramid of Cestius, and other well-known monuments of the artist's own age, reproduced with marked freedom. The cortege is also seen again, approaching the city gate this time, with the eagle audaciously perched upon the very head of Tarquin himself, to his delight but evident discomfort. Both panels have a naïve and fantastic quality which exemplifies the best characteristics of the narrative and episodic style.

The early sixteenth century unpainted cassone type is represented by a fine example lent by Mr. and Mrs. John L. Severance. The curved body of the chest is decorated with mythological figures in high relief, the well-polished walnut surfaces of these figures standing out in strong contrast against the gilded background. Another example of the sixteenth century unpainted type is an Italian chest lent by Mrs. Henry Lefavour of Boston. The other pieces of furniture are all examples belonging to the Museum's collection and have been exhibited before.

A fine painted terra cotta head of Christ, attributed to the school of Verrocchio, and purchased last year from the Charles W. Harkness Endowment Fund, is shown on the Severance cassone. It is a good example of a type made popular by Donatello and his followers in the fifteenth century and still retains its old polychromy. Its likeness to the Christ head in the group of *The Incredulity of St. Thomas* in Or San Michele by Verrocchio warrants the more particular attribution of the Harkness piece to that artist's atelier.

Italian fifteenth century sculpture is always interesting in its use of material and the adaptation of that particular material to the desired use: for example, in this gallery there are marble sculptures, examples of unglazed, painted, and glazed terra cotta, and stucco reliefs which are really casts taken from an original marble. The marble *Madonna and Child* by Bartolommeo Bellano, in the Museum's own collection, is characteristic of reliefs in the more permanent material. Bellano was a pupil of Donatello and has caught something of the master's deeply serious feeling in this relief. He was a Paduan and came under the influence of the great Florentine sculptor when he came to Padua to work on the *Gattamelata* statue for the *Piazza del Santo*.

In marked contrast to the sober and more reflective art of the Donatellesque Bellano is the beautiful stucco relief by Antonio Rossellino lent by Samuel Mather. An entirely different spirit is evident in this. It is a creation of pure charm without any deep religious feeling but with the most exquisite searching for beauty of surface and contour. No more lovely putto was ever modelled than the exquisite smiling figure with rosy wings, which hovers behind the head of the *Madonna*. The relief has retained its original painted color—color which has only gained in quality with the added mellowness of time.

Reliefs of stucco were taken directly from the original marble either by the sculptor himself or by a contemporary. For this reason they often exist in more than one copy. An identical version of the Mather piece is in the Berlin Museum and the original marble is in the J. Pierpont Morgan collection.

A sculptured head of Francesco Sforza, famous condottiere, and Duke of Milan, is also loaned by Samuel Mather. The Italians of the early Renaissance were particularly fond of this

type of portrait in full profile, permitting themselves to be painted with oftentimes remorseless veracity. They liked sculptural representations as well, which were used architecturally as decorative motives. Such must have been the provenance of this piece.

The art of Giovanni Antonio Amadeo, another artist of the Milanese or Lombard school, is represented by a charming fragment which is perhaps a representation of the Marriage Supper at Cana. Several figures are seated about a table which is slightly foreshortened, at the right servants bear aloft platters holding delicacies for the banquet, and a youth pours water into a wine jar. Amadeo was a mannered sculptor who did much of the work in the Certosa of Pavia, the principal monument of the Lombard school. Such details as the curiously articulated hands of the seated figures are particularly characteristic of him.

A lovely marble of the Madonna and Child, lent by William G. Mather, shows the spirit which animated the art of the Sienese, Jacopo della Quercia. While this is probably not by the artist's own hand its quality marks it as being by one of his closest followers. Certainly it is worthy of the deepest study.

Finally, there is a case of majolica lent by Samuel Mather and W. G. Mather. In it are examples of the earlier decorated types and a number of later Urbino pieces with historical subjects. Several pieces have the addition of Gubbio lustre. Although they are examples of what at the time were table-ware of a certain elaboration, they too are instinct with that sure decorative sense which appears throughout the Italian Renaissance whether it be in majolica, in furniture, in painting, or in sculpture. It is in an attempt to recreate something of this feeling that the room has been re-arranged.

W. M. M.

### THE McMYLER MEMORIAL

Three names have been added to the short list of those who, in appreciation of gifts valued at more than \$25,000, have been elected Benefactors, the "highest membership at the disposal of the Museum." Those recently so honored are Mrs. P. J. McMyler, Miss Gertrude McMyler, and Mrs. Charles F. Briggs, elected on February seventeenth in acknowledgment of their splendid gift, in memory of the late P. J. McMyler, of the memorial organ and an endowment fund of \$200,000 to maintain the organ and the Department of Musical Arts.